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QUAKER HILL

(LOCAL HISTORY)

S E R I E S

**VII. Hiram B. Jones
and his School.**

BY

REV. EDWARD L. CHICHESTER



Class _____

Book _____



HIRAM B. JONES,

SILHOUETTE IN THE POSSESSION OF
MISS MATTIE WING.

HIRAM B. JONES

AND HIS SCHOOL

BY

REV. EDWARD L. CHICHESTER

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HIRAM B. JONES AND HIS SCHOOL.

Long before the Public School had found itself, and begun to exercise the dominating influence it has come to have on the education of the youth of America, the Academy, started by private enterprise, and reflecting the character and disposition of its individual founders, occupied a large place in the training of the boys and girls of this country.

These schools were scattered all over the land. They were independent one of the other. The instructors missed the suggestion and inspiration that belongs to organization, but, on the other hand, they were free from outside interference. They were permitted to break and to ride their own hobbies.

Originality had full play, and men and women of rare gifts and complete devotion to a high ideal, impressed themselves and left their mark on those who came under their influence, to a very great degree.

Early in the 19th century Quaker Hill was the home of such an institution.

About three miles south of the old meeting house, at the crossing known as *Wing's Corners*, the school house stood.

No vestige of this building remains.

Wm. D. Akin's dwelling stands on the corner directly east of its site, and a very old

house, untenanted, stands a few rods to the north. From the highway at this point, looking north, one can still trace the old road, an untrodden lane between stone walls.

It goes over the hill and formerly passed the David Irish farm house, and was traversed by the Quaker Hill day scholars.

(This was a bleak enough road in cold weather, as a small boy of the period, Mr. Wm. Henry Akin, can testify, for he nearly lost his life here in the snow drifts of an old fashioned winter.)

Abram Wing, by whose family name the Corners are known, occupied the older part of what is now the Akin farm house.

Aunt Ruth Wing, Abram's wife, was a sister of David Irish.

She is still recalled by people on the Hill, as she sat on the fronting seats of the old meeting house in those early days when the place was thronged. Her full motherly face can be seen today, among the pictures of these old time Friends, in the albums of her descendants.

Aunt Ruth Wing boarded the scholars of the Jones Academy, as the school came to be called.

In time, the Academy was moved from Wing's Corners to what is known to the older residents of Quaker Hill, as the Robert Osborn place, now occupied by James Turner. This lies about half a mile east of the Corners and



THE SCHOOL HOUSE.

is reached by following a winding road through a thicket of second growth timber.

The old house, with its two front doors and many rooms, where the students lodged, still stands on its original foundation, but the vestige of a stone wall, across the road, is all that is left to mark the site of the school house.

This has been taken down, moved, and put up again (minus its belfry), as a dwelling, and its weather beaten sides loom against the sky a quarter of a mile to the south.

It is hard to realize that in this sparsely settled region, a country of rocks and huckleberries and thickets of small timber, there once stood a prominent institution of learning, but such is the fact.

These solitary roads were enlivened with groups of young people, and a procession of seventy or more might have been seen wending its way to a Friend's Quarterly Meeting, at the Valley Meeting House.

A printed card, preserved by Mrs. Jane Crane, reads as follows :

“BOARDING SCHOOL

BY H. B. JONES,

In which are taught the rudiments of Language, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, History, English Grammar, Rhetoric, Philosophy, Astronomy, Chemistry, Book-Keeping, Surveying, Navigation, Algebra and Geometry.”

We learn that later French was introduced, taught by a Parisian. one Peter Lux

Following the list of studies is a statement of terms.

These were \$18 per quarter. This sum paid for board, washing, stationery, tuition. evening school and evening lights.

Though anyone taking the last five mentioned studies, book-keeping, surveying, navigation, algebra and geometry, was charged two dollars extra.

The card is dated Nov. 1st, 1834.

Hiram B. Jones, the founder of this school, was of Welsh descent.

Thomas Jones, his grandfather, came to this country from Wales and was a doctor and preacher.

This old Welshman died in the winter time, in a house that stood on a rocky ledge over near John Worden's, and the neighbors carried the body on a hand sled across the intervening miles of drifts, to the Quaker Hill burying ground.

Thomas Jones left a son, Benjamin, who married Phoebe Burroughs, a member of the Society of Friends.

They had a large family of children, and Hiram was their second son. He was an original man, living in a region where advantages for schooling were poor, he never-the-less secured an education, that, with the gifts of a

born teacher, enabled him to do a work whose impress is felt in this region, to this day.

He seems to have been self taught to a great degree, though it is said that he attended an Academy at Red Hook in this county, and there distinguished himself in grammar. One who attended his school says that he was a very *homely* man. He is described as having sunken cheeks and a broad chin.

A silhouette of his profile may be seen in a collection owned by Miss Mattie Wing, which gives us the impression of a man with a sharp, inquisitive nose, and a well rounded head. We are told that he was tall and ungainly in figure, and absent minded and absorbed in manner. He was indifferent to money matters, and is said to have left the financial interest of the school entirely in the hands of a younger brother. Hiram was a good disciplinarian, but *not* given to caning. The pupils, so far as can be ascertained, were given a great deal of freedom, allowed at times, when the weather permitted, to study under the trees, and only judged by the results in the classroom.

Here was plainly a case where character, and not mere precept governed. His influence over his pupils was due to a natural force and ability, and something about him that made them *respect* and *love* him.

He played ball with the boys, and was a gentle chivalrous friend to the girls.

One day when Charles Wing (one of the Wing boys), with an equally mischievous companion, appeared in the school room with their clothes dirty and dripping wet, Hiram asked how they happened to be in such a plight, but seeing two of the girls blush painfully he deferred his enquiries till he had them alone, and then learned that Charles and his friend had attempted to steal a kiss over the wash tubs, while the girls were doing their weekly laundry in Aunt Ruth's kitchen, and their elders were gone to monthly meeting. Some decayed pumpkins and a goodly supply of dirty water being handy, the boys were repulsed, but what impressed the old lady, who was one of the girls and recalled this episode of her school life, was the great kindness and tact of the teacher in examining them in *private* and not forcing them to tell the story before the school.

There is no doubt that the boys and girls of this day were much like other youngsters, though some of the older people recall their escapades with a deprecatory air, as if they were a little ashamed that such things should have stuck in their memories, also a little fearful of the influence their confessions might have on the rising generation.

It is said that there were mischievous boys at Jones' Academy seventy years ago, who

parodied familiar songs and made the woods ring as they took their solemn first day march to meeting, and the story is told of certain youngsters who covered an immense pipe hole in the floor with a bit of carpet and entrapped the unwary feet of an unpopular young woman, who took care of the rooms.

In these early days of hand labor and home production, the pupils were shod by a traveling shoemaker who occupied a room at the school. One night this man's bedstead was jerked from under him and hauled through the window, a horse having been hitched to it from the outside. On another occasion a wagon loaded in the evening for a journey to Poughkeepsie, by Benjamin Jones, Hiram's youngest brother, was found in the morning on the ridge pole of the barn. It had been taken apart, put together, and reloaded by a committee of students, at this dizzy elevation.

Such doings give one some idea of the energy and resourcefulness of the young men of the time—qualities that would shine at Yale or at Harvard today.

Hiram Jones had some broader associations, for his name occurs in the records of the Free Masons' Lodge at Durham, New York, in which he held a high position, and his regalia is still in the possession of one of his family, nor was he alone on Quaker Hill in his intellectual tastes and attainments.

He was one of the prominent members of a debating club (christened Phi Beta Kappa by Albro Akin), and was associated with Daniel D. Akin, Elihu Wing, Jonathan Akin and Isaac Merritt. In Daniel Akin he had a most congenial friend. It is told of these two that meeting one evening on the road near where Akin Hall now stands, they got into conversation and talked until the sun rose the next morning.

This incident falls in with another. Hiram was to be examined in some study and took his examination walking and talking out of doors, with his examiner, like the true pedagogue that he was.

As might be supposed, the classes in grammar were a feature of the school.

The old English Reader, "designed," as its title page says, "to assist the young persons to read with propriety and effect, to improve their language and sentiments; and to inculcate some of the most important principles of piety and virtue," was used in the school as a text book. Prose in front, and poetry in the back. it furnished fruitful selections for parsing, and one can picture a group of anxious pupils dissecting such a quaint bit of English as this :
"The rose had been wash'd, just wash'd in a shower,

Which Mary to Anna convey'd;
The plentiful moisture encumber'd the flower,
And weighed down its beautiful head.

The cup was all fill'd, and the leaves were all
wet,
And it seem'd to a fanciful view,
To weep for the buds it had left with regret,
On the flourishing bush where it grew."

As each word was named and classified in set terms with verifying rule, cited and recited, the teacher on his chair in the corner would nod, not in approval, but in slumber, and appear oblivious to everything, but let the slightest mistake be made, and he would spring up with a shout

However familiar the teacher might be out of doors, he could be terrifying enough to a careless pupil in the school room.

In an old book, with yellow pages and brown ink, are a number of acrostics, epitaphs and sentiments for albums, in Hiram's hand writing.

The initials of the first lines of one spell the name of Louise Amanda Holmes, another of Mary Ann Merritt, another of Samuel Chamberlain Peak.

There are two acrostics on the name of James Flagler.

These verses, copied into an album of Margaret Toffey, about the time that she became Mrs. James Craft, are entitled "Happiness" and give an idea of Hiram's poetic gift and the glimpse of a gentle humor.

"To smooth the rugged path of life,
All grasp at earthly joys,

And each to shun its toil and strife
Some subterfuge employs.

Some plough the briny deep forlorn
On fortune's fickle raft,
Some breathe the sweets of balmy morn,
And some resort to *Craft*"

Hiram never married. This man seems old because his work was done before most of us were born, but in the little wind swept burying ground that crowns this Hill there is an odd squared stone of white marble with this inscription, almost obliterated now, for the letters were chiseled on the side that faces the east storms :

"In memory of Hiram B. Jones, who departed this life October 29, 1834, aged 38 years." * * *

Then follow these words : "Fraternal affection reared this stone to indicate the spot where the dust of a brother reposes.

He rejoiced in the redeeming influence of education and fell under its arduous duties. His last words to his pupils—Live to do good.—Desired no monument but their affections."

The Jones Academy was carried on after Hiram died by his brother, Cyrenus, and flourished until the spring of 1842, when it was finally closed.

Later, we find Cyrenus teaching for a couple of years at Binghamton, New York, and in 1844 serving as the first principal of the Eaton-

town Social Institute, at Eatontown, New Jersey.

Many of the pupils of Jones' Academy came from a distance. Students from New York and Albany prized the advantages that the school offered. The names make a long list, among them is that of George T. Pierce, who graduated here, went to Yale College, and afterward saw long service in the State Legislature; Peter Dorland of Poughkeepsie, for fourteen years surrogate of Dutchess County; Richard M. Hunt, the architect; Jessie Peck, a teacher (he built an academy at New Fairfield); Justus Leeseey, became a physician, and Burroughs Fanton, whose mother, Nancy Jones, was a sister of Hiram, was a preacher. George Wilson, another student, was internal revenue collector in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Among many who became prominent in business enterprises were Archibald Dunlop of Troy, New York, and George Riggs, connected with Hudson River steam navigation.

Benjamin Jones (Hiram's youngest brother) was a member of the New York Produce Exchange.

Nelson Ludington, one of Chicago's early, successful, and most conservative business men, studied here. He was a director of the Fifth National Bank of Chicago, and for nine years its president, and afterwards a director of the National Bank of America. He founded, and

was the head of the N. Ludington Lumber Company.

Jackson W. Bowdish, another student, was for many years cashier of the National Bank of Pawling.

The local names of this region are well represented in the school register. Akin, Toffey, Hoag, Merritt, Irish, Wing, Haviland, Adams, Steadwell, Briggs, Ludington, Dutcher, Field, Wakeman and Holmes—with Gerow, Peck, Leeseey and Hopkins, from over New Fairfield way.

The names of the alumni of Jones Academy, now living, so far as they could be obtained, are : George W. Adams of Ball's Pond; William Henry Akin and his sister, Mary J. Akin, who spend their summers on Quaker Hill ; Mrs. L. A. Barlow of Sherman, Connecticut ; Mrs. Samuel Barnum of Danbury ; Charles Burdick of Brookfield, Connecticut.

Mrs. Jane Crane of this region (formerly Jane Pepper), Harvey P. Farrington of New York, a trustee and director in several prominent financial institutions in the city ; Cyrus Frost of Croton-on-the-Hudson ; Mrs. Frances A. Gould, a daughter of Daniel D. Akin ; James C. Haight of Patterson, New York ; Mrs. John Hoyt of Ball's Pond (formerly Louisa Amanda Holmes); Philip Hoag of South Dover ; Abram Wing Irish of Poughkeepsie, for many years in the surrogate's office ; Henry Peat of Danbury,

Connecticut ; Richard H. L. Townsend of New York city, for many years in business there ; Henry Penny, Milan Steadwell, Mrs. George K. Taber (formerly Charlotte Field) and Mrs. J. I. Wanzer (formerly Phœbe T. Irish), all of Pawling, New York.

In addition to these alumni are Hiram B. Jones, a son of Benjamin Jones, Hiram's youngest brother, of New York city, and Hiram T. Jones of Elizabeth, New Jersey, the grandson of Thomas Jones, his elder brother, who, with their wives, have been invited to the exercises and collation of Quaker Hill Day, and are with us now.

One has said that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man," and that "all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons."

The spirit and character of this region can be understood, only as we go back to the founders and study those who lived their lives and did their work here in the early days. Occupying an honored place among these, is Hiram B. Jones.

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